

‘MY FAMILY IS FOREVER GRATEFUL’

When Ashari Parker arrived into the world on Nov. 19 she weighed just 2 pounds, 3 ounces and measured 14 inches long.

“Her original due date was Jan. 27,” Ashari’s father Antonio Parker said. “She was born 10 weeks premature.”

Parker, the assistant director of the King Center in Jackson, and his wife Aisha, had experienced pregnancy complications before.

During the couple’s first pregnancy, their son AJ was born 12 weeks premature due to Aisha having pre-eclampsia, a pregnancy complication characterized by high blood pressure and damage to the mother’s kidneys. AJ was delivered at 28 weeks and spent the next 137 days at the neonatal care unit in Ann Arbor.

“When AJ was about 4, we decided to expand our family,” Antonio said. “With our second pregnancy, we found out our son Ashton was stillborn.”

Antonio said due to the couple’s history, they were both anxious and excited when they found at last spring they were pregnant for a third time.

“On Nov. 9, the doctors decided to put my wife on bed rest for the remainder of the pregnancy,” he said. “The doctors were hoping to get my wife to at least 32 weeks along, so she would have been on bed rest for another month. Little did we know the bed rest would only last 10 more days.”

Born premature via an emergency C-section, Ashari was taken to the intensive care unit where she would stay for the next 39 days.

“The first two months were very difficult for my family,” Antonio said. “My wife had to live in a hotel room, while I



Antonio Parker pictured with his wife Aisha, son AJ, and newborn baby daughter Ashari. Ashari, who was delivered 10 weeks premature due to pregnancy complications.

stayed home with our son.”

Aisha’s sick time ran out Dec. 9, about three weeks before she could return with her newborn.

“We had faith that God would provide a way for us to stay afloat,” Antonio said, “and he did.”

Every year, City employees organize an annual Christmas luncheon - complete with a silent auction with the funds set aside to benefit an employee facing difficult circumstances.

Shortly before the Christmas holiday, the Parker family was granted \$3,806 from the employee auction. Shortly after the Christmas holiday, on Dec. 28, Aisha and a healthy Ashari returned home to Jackson.

“My family is forever grateful to everyone who contributed,” Parker said. “With all that was going on, we wanted to be able to have a normal Christmas for AJ. The donations made that possible.”

FIRM, CITY WORK TOWARD NEW OFFICE IN DOWNTOWN JACKSON

Jackson Mayor Bill Jors called it the most promising development to hit downtown Jackson in his tenure.

The news that Jackson-based engineering firm Commonwealth Associates is working closely with City officials toward building a new headquarters within the City limits came last month, when the City and firm entered into an option agreement on a parcel of land on the southeast corner of Blackstone Street and Louis Glick Highway.

The current timeline for the project would see earth excavated beginning in the spring of 2018.

Dennis DeCosta, Commonwealth president, said the firm is currently producing a feasibility study to make sure the property in question will work.

“This development is good for Jackson, and it’s good for downtown Jackson,” he said. “At this point, we’re doing our due diligence and working with City officials, architects and construction firms to see if we can make this dream a reality.”

Part of the initial plan includes the engineering firm consolidating its three Jackson locations, including



An artists' rendering of what the proposed Commonwealth Associates headquarters could look like on the corner of Blackstone and Louis Glick Highway.

the current headquarters on Argyle Street in Blackman Township, into the proposed downtown development.

“The prospect of a corporation like Commonwealth moving into Jackson and bringing with it some 150 highly qualified professionals into the City’s urban core is more than welcome news,” City Manager Patrick Burtch

said.

Roughly two years after City officials opted to clear one block of old, dilapidated parking lot in downtown Jackson, infill the area and offer it to developers, the area could soon be home to new downtown Jackson businesses, apartments and buildings - the first such developments in Jackson in

some 15 years.

“The apartments will continue downtown, they’re going to need to,” Jors said. “We’re going to have a completely different downtown, and soon.”

Commonwealth engineers high voltage power systems for utilities and designs power generation facilities, among other projects.

POLICE AND FIRE DIRECTOR RETIRES

Following the retirement of Jackson Director of Police and Fire Services Matthew Heins, his second in command Elmer Hitt was recently named acting director.

Currently serving as the deputy director, Hitt will

oversee all director duties and serve in the interim until such time a permanent appointment is made to the position vacated by Heins.

Heins retired from his position to become security manager for Henry Ford Al-

legiance Health hospital. He will lead a team of security officers who monitor the health system’s properties in the Jackson area.

Heins began his career as a cadet in the police department in 1989. He was hired

as police chief in 2007 before the position of director of police and fire services was created in 2012 - a position he was subsequently appointed.

Hitt was named acting director Jan. 6.





MAYOR
Bill Jors

COUNCIL (Ward)
Arlene Robinson 1
Freddie Dancy 2
Daniel Greer 3
Craig Pappin 4
Andrew Frounfelker 5
Derek Dobies 6

CITY MANAGER
Patrick Burtch

MEETINGS/EVENTS

Jan. 24 • 6:30 p.m.
City Council Meeting
City Hall, 2nd Floor

Feb. 7 • 6:30 p.m.
City Council Meeting
City Hall, 2nd Floor

Feb. 14 • 5 p.m.
Winter Tax Deadline
City Hall, 1st Floor

Monday, Feb. 20
City Hall Closed
Presidents' Day

Feb. 21 • 6:30 p.m.
City Council Meeting
City Hall, 2nd Floor

For more information about City programs, visit the City's website at www.cityofjackson.org

A Day in the Life

Fire Captain Todd Weaver

Ever since Jackson Fire Department Captain Todd Weaver began his career as a firefighter nearly 30 years ago, there haven't been many "typical days."

"Generally speaking I'll start at 8 a.m. one day and work my 24-hour shift through 8 a.m. the next," he said, "and I'll go out on all the runs. But those runs are different every day you do it."

Firefighters and captains with the Jackson department run calls for everything ranging from house fires and fire alarms to car accidents and medical emergencies.

Weaver has seen a lot in his three decades as a firefighter, he explained, and from a number of different perspectives. He began his career in fire fighting as a volunteer firefighter for Napoleon Township in 1987. In 1995, he was hired as a firefighter within the Jackson Fire Department. In 2014, he was appointed fire captain.

"As a firefighter my job was to run into buildings, get people and get out, and hold the hose," he said. "As a driver, I was responsible for making sure all the equipment worked during emergency runs."

The different perspectives now serves him well as a captain, he said, since he's in charge of commanding the firefighters on runs and keeping them safe.

"There's a lot of pressure," he said.

Weaver recently completed a nine-month training course at Eastern Michigan University for executive firefighters. Dubbed "Executive Fire Staff and Command," the class taught Weaver how to better command and manage different personalities, as well as handle different scenarios that he may see as a fire captain.

"It can be challenging to command such a wide range of generations and people," Weaver said. "The class wasn't a requirement, but it's still an honor to be invited to it. There are three members of the Jackson fire Department who have attended."

Weaver said he's experienced a number of memorable runs as a Jackson firefighter and captain, the most recent a fire call on First Street shortly after he was named



Todd Weaver

captain.

"We went out to the fire and it was a mess right from the get-go," he said. "The husband had made it out of the home but he wanted to go back in and get this wife. A police officer was holding him back, and in the tussle the police officer actually broke his leg."

Weaver said his crew began and search a rescue for the woman in the home, and he went through a side yard to assess the situation.

"On my way to the backyard I got pinned against the house by the family dog," he said. "The police had to end up tazing the dog to get it off me, and when I returned to better assess everything my crew had saved the woman and were putting out the fire - all without my commanding them.

"They were doing everything right," he said. "It makes you pretty damn proud."



CONSUMERS DONATES TOWARD MURAL

Consumers Energy recently donated the last \$25,000 piece to the Glidden Parker Mural project's puzzle.

The Jackson-based energy provider announced it's \$25,000 donation last month, rounding out \$435,000 in corporate, foundation and grant funds that account for 75 percent of the total project costs.

The \$583,000 project calls for the construction of a new facility in Horace Blackman Park that will not only protect and preserve the large, lighted mural designed by famed artist Glidden Parker, but will also include an art exhibit, a stage for outdoor music and a drop-down projector for summer movie nights in downtown Jackson.



Crews work on the Glidden Parker mural project in downtown Jackson.

See 'Mural' • Pg. 5

A Message from Jackson Mayor Bill Jors

With 2016 behind us and 2017 now in full swing, Jackson residents and those in the community have much to look forward to in the coming year.

A number of projects in downtown Jackson that began simply as an idea will so be brick and mortar buildings, complete and full of new City residents.

The Lofts on Louis development is scheduled to be constructed this year, as is the Glidden Parker mural structure in Horace Blackman Park.

With more people downtown, every resident - whether they reside in the City's core or not - will see benefits with the increase in tax revenue into City cof-

fers. Those taxes paid by residents living downtown and property owners owning downtown mean more infrastructure and road improvements in the years to come, all across the City. It means more street sweeping for residents all across the community. It means a healthier and more vibrant community as a whole.

The announcement that Commonwealth Associates is planning to consolidate three locations and move their headquarters to the corner of Blackstone and Louis Glick is the biggest news to hit the City since I took this office one year ago.

Rest assured, the City and its employees will work diligently to assist the engi-

neering firm as best we can to help in their move within the City limits.

If completed, some 150-200 highly-paid, well-educated professionals will work and play in downtown Jackson, serving as another catalyst to the community as a whole.

The downtown is likely to look very different in two to three years, and in positive and exciting ways.

As the weather warms, residents should expect more infrastructure projects in their future, including reconstruction of Louis Glick Highway, Washington Avenue and Michigan Avenue from the City limits to the downtown loop.

This year, as with every year, City staff and elected



officials will work diligently to better the community we all call home.

For these reasons and others, the future looks bright in Jackson!

Mayor Bill Jors



DID YOU KNOW?

Where Your Property Taxes Go

Winter tax season is underway, with Feb. 14 the deadline to pay one's tax bill, and City property owners should know where those hard-earned tax dollars go.

Every year, property owners are billed twice - once in the winter and once in the summer, and each bill contains a wide variety of millages that fund everything from the local prison to Jackson College.

Property owners within the City of Jackson and within the Jackson Public Schools district are re-

viewed here. **Those who live outside the JPS district or have tax exemptions would pay different amounts than shown.**

Now, let's take a closer look and how a typical property tax bill in Jackson is broken down.

For every dollar one pays annually in property taxes within the City and within the JPS district, the majority, or 33 cents, goes to Jackson Public Schools. Next on the list is the City, which receives 26 cents of every property tax dollar annually. Of that 26 cents,

the majority is set aside to pay the pensions of retired firefighters and police officers. Jackson County ISD receives roughly 14 percent of property tax revenues, with the State Education Tax garnering 9 cents on every dollar.

Jackson County receives 8 cents, while the City DDA and Jackson College receive 3 cents and 2 cents, respectively.

Rounding out one's tax bill is everything from the medical care facility, jail, libraries and the Jackson Transportation Authority.

MURAL

From Pg. 4

presented by the Downtown Development Authority.

"Beyond its historical and artistic value, this project will be a focal point in the transformation of downtown Jackson," said Derek Dobies, 6th Ward Councilman and project spokesman. "Under the strong leadership of Patti Poppe, Consumers Energy continues to be a major player in downtown Jackson's redevelopment. This donation underscores that commitment."

Consumers Energy President and CEO Patti Poppe said Consumers Energy is excited to see the City's core continue to grow.

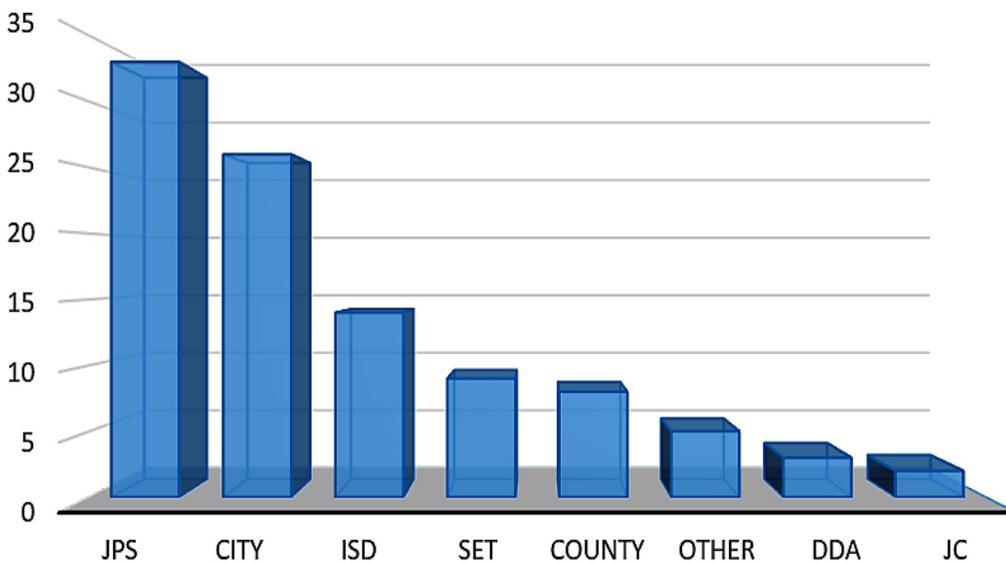
"Whether it's new housing, employers, restaurants, store or projects like this, we are excited to see downtown Jackson flourish," she said.

Construction crews began work on the downtown landmark late last summer, with a completion date scheduled for this spring.

Consumers Energy is the last in a long list of donors for the project, including the National Endowment for the Arts (\$50,000), the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs (\$75,000), CP Federal Credit Union (\$150,000), The Weatherwax Foundation (\$50,000), the Phil & Pat Willis Foundation (\$20,000), Dawn Foods Foundation (\$20,000), Alro Steel Foundation (\$20,000), Experience Jackson (\$25,000), and the Jackson Public Arts Commission (\$148,000).

The total cost of the project is \$583,000 after contractors provided a bid savings of more than \$40,000.

Percentages of Property Tax Dollars



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